

December 13, 2004

Dear Mr. President,

It has been my distinct honor and privilege to serve in your first term. I would like nothing more than to continue to serve at your pleasure. The extraordinary opportunities you have permitted me to assume these last four years have been experiences of a lifetime.

You have often observed that we are all privileged to serve the public for a season, a term, or a career, but we are expected to deliver our very best effort during that time. I have been inspired by your example in pursuit of that responsibility. You have never expected any more of us than you do yourself. In the most challenging moments during my service I have drawn considerable strength, resolve and determination to do what's right by the standards you set every day -- and that has often been a difficult standard to meet. But every day I have done my best.

Along the way you have also taught me the extraordinary importance of attending to family. Again, by your regular example with military families -- and close to home -- with the Columbia families, you and the First Lady have set an extraordinary example. The commitment and sincerity of your effort is unmistakable. You have inspired me to always try to do the same.

It is this very commitment to family that draws me to conclude that I must depart public service. The first of three children will begin college next fall. I owe them the same opportunity my parents provided for me to pursue higher education without the crushing burden of debt thereafter. That commitment from them made possible all that I have been able to pursue in my professional life. I owe my children that same option, but I can't do that if I remain in public service.

As difficult as it is for me in reaching this decision, I have been reinforced by the knowledge that you have motivated this priority.

The tremendous honor to serve you and be part of this impressive team has prompted me to hang on as long as possible. I truly wish that it could be longer.

In the time ahead, my Laura and I will always be available to assist you, the First Lady and this great Administration any way you feel we can be helpful. My fondest hope is to pursue opportunities which permit public service contributions and meet obligations to our family.

It is, therefore, with great reluctance that I respectfully submit my resignation as NASA Administrator. At your pleasure, I will continue until you have named a successor and in the hopes that the Senate will act on your nominee by February. But, I will be completely guided by your preference. Having participated in the effort to formulate your strategy

and secure the Congress' support of your budget, I want to affect whatever transition you feel maximizes NASA's prospect for implementing your vision.

Laura joins me in wishing you and the First Lady the very best for a Merry Christmas and happy holiday season.

With respect,

Sean O'Keefe